

## Message Text

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DEPARTMENT PASS AGRICULTURE/FAS

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TAGS: EAGR, CZ

SUBJECT: CROP SITUATION - CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1. SUMMARY. AGATTACHE COMPLETED TOUR MAJOR AGRICULTURAL REGIONS CZECHOSLOVAKIA JUNE 10. BASED ON PREVAILING CONDITIONS TOTAL PRODUCTION OF GRANIS IN 1975 MAY FALL SHORT OF RECORD 10.3 MILLION TONS HARVESTED IN 1974. THIS CONFIRMED BY FEDERAL AGRICULTURE MINISTRY OFFICIALS IN PRAGUE. END SUMMARY.

2. AGATTACHE COMPLETED CROP SURVEY JUNE 10 IN MAJOR CZECHOSLOVAKIAN FRAMING REGIONS - WESTERN SLOVAKIA, SOUTHERN MORAVIA AND CENTRAL BOHEMIA. AT END TOUR MET TOMAN, DIRECTOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION DIVISION OF FEDERAL MINISTRY AGRICULTURE, AND CECIL, HIS DEPUTY. BOTH WERE COOPERATIVE AND FRANK IN DISCUSSING PROSPECTS FOR 1975 HARVEST.

3. WINTER GRAIN WHICH CONSISTS MAINLY WHEAT AND RYE USUALLY REPRESENTS ONE-HALF ALL GRAIN PRODUCED IN COUNTRY. CONDITIONS LOOKED BELOW AVERAGE IN EAST (SLOVAKIA) WERE RAINS DURING FALL PLANTINGS HAMPERED WORK AND WHEAT NOW LOOKED THIN AND UNEVEN IN SOME FIELDS.  
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IN CONTRAST IN WEST (CZECH LAND) WHEAT FIELDS LOOKED THICKER AND

MORE EVEN BUT LODGING FROM RECENT RAINS WAS ALSO SEEN. TOMAN OF FEDERAL MINAG SAID DESPITE LAST FALL'S BAD WEATHER DURING SEEDING THEY WERE SATISFIED WITH WINTER CROPS (WHEAT). BASED ON CURRENT CONDITIONS WHEAT YIELDS AGAIN MAY APPROXIMATE 40 QUINTALS PER HECTAR. HOWEVER SINCE WHEAT THIS YEAR IS GROWN ON A SMALLER AREA THE COUNTRY - EVEN IF GOOD YIELDS ARE OBTAINED - MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY MATCH LAST YEAR'S 5.2 MILLION TONS CROP.

4. AMONG SPRING GRAINS BARLEY AND CORN ARE MOST IMPORTANT ALTHOUGH OATS ALSO GROWN WIDELY IN HIGH LYING REGIONS. USUALLY SOME 30 PERCENT OF ALL GRAIN PRODUCED IN COUNTRY IS BARLEY. SPRING SOWING OF CROPS WAS BADLY HAMPERED BY RAINS AND COOL WEATHER PARTICULARLY IN WESTERN PART OF COUNTRY. RECENT RAINS AND COOL TEMPERATURES LIKEWISE WERE DELAYING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CROP. AUTHORITIES DO NOT EXPECT MATCH LAST YEAR'S RESULTS IN SPRING CROPS (EXCEPT CORN). BARLEY YIELD IN 1974 REACHED 39 QUINTALS PER HECTAR AND IS DOUBTFUL THIS CAN BE REPEATED THIS YEAR. DESPITE LARGER ACREAGE PLANTED TO BARLEY PRODUCTION THIS YEAR MAY NOT REACH 3 MILLION TONS.

5. OUTLOOK FOR CORN ON OTHER HAND LOOKS GOOD TO EXCELLENT. IN WESTERN SLOVAKIA WHICH PRODUCES BULK OF COUNTRY'S CORN CROP PLANTING CONDITIONS ARE IDEAL AND YOUNG PLANTS WERE DEVELOPING WELL. HOWEVER RECENT COOL WEATHER AND RAINS MAY DELAY DEVELOPMENT OF PLANT. AUTHORITIES HOPE CORN YIELDS THIS YEAR WILL SURPASS 40 QUINTALS PER HECTAR REACHED IN 1974. THE COUNTRY PLANTED 5 PERCENT MORE ACREAGE TO CORN IN 1975. A CROP OF 7000,000 TO 8000,000 MT OF CORN CAN BE EXPECTED.

6. AMONG ROW CROPS SUGAR BEET AND POTATO MOST IMPORTANT. BEET SOWING GOT OFF TO GOOD START IN EAST BUT WAS HAMPERED AND DELAYED BY RAINS IN WEST. DESPITE THIS SUGAR BEET WAS DEVELOPING WELL BECAUSE GOOD MOSITURE, BUT CURRENT COOL WEATHER MAY DELAY DEVELOPMENT OF PLANT. THINNING WAS ABOUT ON SCHEDULE. WHILE AUTHORITIES THIS YEAR DO NOT EXPECT OBTAIN LAST YEAR'S 8.2 MILLION TONS, THEY HOPE SUGAR CONTENT OF THIS YEAR'S CROP WILL BE HIGHER THAN LAST YEAR. THE COUNTRY PLANTED 5 PERCENT MORE LAND TO SUGAR BEET THIS YEAR. POTATOES LOOKED GOOD TO EXCELLENT BUT OUTPUT WILL DECLINE MAINLY BECAUSE OF REDUCED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACREAGE THIS YEAR.

7. OVERALL ASSESSMENT. TOMAN AND CECIL OF FEDERAL MINAG IN FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSION SAID AUTHORITIES LAST YEAR WERE TOO HASTY TO MAKE PREDICTIONS ON OUTCOME 1974 HARVEST. THEY ERRED TWICE. FIRST EARLY IN SEASON WHEN FORECAST ONLY AVERAGE HARVEST. LATER WHEN GROWING CONDITIONS IMPROVED FORECAST RECORD GRAIN CROP OF 10.6 MILLION TONS AT TIME WHEN CORN WAS STILL ON GROUND.

HEAVY RAINS CAUSED DISAPPOINTING CORN HARVEST AND NOW MINISTRY SCALING DOWN 1974 RECORD GRAIN CROP FROM 10.6 TO 10.3 MILLION TONS. TO AVOID SUCH MISTAKES IN FUTURE, OFFICIALS NOW MORE CAREFUL DISCUSSING PROSPECTS OF GRAIN HARVEST. MINAG OFFICIALS SAY ONLY THAT LAST YEAR'S RECORD GRAIN CROP WILL BE HARD TO BEAT THIS YEAR AND THAT AVERAGE YIELD FOR ALL GRAINS MAY FALL SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 33 TO 38 QUINTALS PER HECTAR. BASED ON APPROXIMATE 2,760,000 HECTARES PLANTED TO ALL GRAINS THE COUNTRY CAN EXPECT A HARVEST OF BETWEEN 9.1 AND 10.5 MILLION MT.

8. COMMENTS. TOMAN AND CECIL UNDERSTANDABLY QUITE CAUTIOUS DISCUSSING PROSPECTS OF GRAIN HARVEST. ALTHOUGH IT STILL TOO EARLY FORECAST CROP PROSPECTS CONDITIONS IN COUNTRY LOOKED ON AVERAGE QUITE GOOD. EVEN IF THE COUNTRY DOES NOT MATCH LAST YEAR'S RECORD OUTPUT OF 10.3 MILLION TONS OF GRAIN, PRODUCTION COULD STILL BE SECOND BEST ON RECORD. WITH PROSPECT FOR LOWER GRAIN CROP IN 1975 (PERHAPS AS MUCH AS 500,000 MT BELOW 1974) COUNTRY WILL CONTINUE BE HEAVY IMPORTER GRAINS TO MEET NEED EXPANDING LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY. BUCHANAN

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